



LIVING Mercy

FALL 2017

2016-2017
Annual Report Inside



Sister
Libby's
Biking
Ministry

STORY ON
PAGE 3

Dear Friends of Mercy,

The word “embrace” brings many images to mind. You may “embrace the holidays” with gatherings of family and friends, interspersed with shopping and decorating and Advent waiting. You may “embrace” the special people in your life with a hug and a kiss. You may “embrace” your professional life by setting goals for your future. The Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community has chosen the theme “Embrace Mercy Anew” to help us prepare for our upcoming Community meeting. We are asking each other to embrace Mercy more intentionally and in new ways.



Sister Laura Reicks, RSM

In every life commitment, the day we make a vow or promise is not the end of the journey, but the beginning. Each day we must intentionally say “yes” again and embrace the blessings and challenges that come with saying “yes.” As Sisters of Mercy, we strive to live more deeply our vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and service of the poor, sick, and uneducated.

In my position, I see wonderful examples of Sisters, Mercy Associates, and Companions of Mercy

embracing Mercy more fully as our charism. One recent example is the recognition of Sister Marilyn Lacey with the Opus Prize for her ministry, Mercy Beyond Borders, which you can read about in this issue. In the words of Pope Francis, “The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person.” His message inspires us to “pattern our behavior after the Son of God who went out to everyone without exception.” (**Misericordiae Vultus**, 2015, Para. 12)

In this magazine, you will read about ways in which we embrace mercy in our changing world. You will experience a new ministry with homeless men and women, a new way of living mercy during retirement years, and the journey of newly elected Sisters to the ministry of Institute leadership.

We embrace each of you through our prayers and our ministries, in whatever way you are a friend of the Sisters of Mercy. We thank you for the ways in which you call us to deepen our lives of Mercy. We invite you to deepen your life of Mercy with us, as we all embrace our loving God and the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy more deeply.

Sincerely,

Sister Laura Reicks, RSM

Sister Laura Reicks, RSM
President



Inspired by the life of Jesus and by our founder Catherine McAuley, the Sisters of Mercy envision a just world for people who are poor, sick and uneducated. The Sisters of Mercy are women of faith who commit our lives to God and our resources to serve, advocate and pray for those in need around the world.

Living Mercy is published by the Sisters of Mercy
West Midwest Community Development Office
7262 Mercy Road • Omaha, NE 68124
402.393.8225 • www.sistersofmercy.org • development@mercywmw.org

West Midwest Development Office

Director of Annual Giving:
Lynn Couvillon Poly, lpoly@mercywmw.org
Donor Relations Manager,
Burlingame and Auburn:
Kelly Miller, kmiller@mercywmw.org
Development Resource Manager:
Amanda Doty, adoty@mercywmw.org
Development Volunteer, Chicago:
Sister Ann Flanagan, RSM
aflanagan@mercywmw.org

Senior Philanthropic Advisor:
Tom Schuyler, tschuyler@mercywmw.org
Senior Philanthropic Advisor:
Sister Maureen Mulcrone, RSM
mmulcrone@mercywmw.org

Copyright 2017 Sisters of Mercy
West Midwest Community.
Living Mercy articles may be reproduced with written
permission from the Sisters of Mercy West Midwest
Community Communications Office.
Direct reprint requests to:
wmwcommunications@mercywmw.org

Mercy Pedalers offer coffee and compassion

"The poor need help today, not next week." - Catherine McAuley, founder of the Sisters of Mercy

As the sun rises over midtown Sacramento, California, Sister Libby Fernandez adjusts her bike helmet and begins to pedal down K Street. She approaches a member of the homeless community who is just waking up. He is packing his bags, getting ready to move on. Sister Libby offers him a hot cup of coffee. "Oh, how wonderful, I would love a cup of coffee with a little cream and sugar," he replies. Sister Libby then asks his name and offers nutritional bars, toiletries or socks, and most importantly, a listening ear.

This is the first interaction of a day where Sister Libby will meet nearly 100 of the estimated 3,500 homeless on the streets of Sacramento.

Riding specially designed bicycles or tricycles to cover more ground, Sister Libby and the other Mercy Pedalers will offer water, food bars, hygiene items, referrals for shelter and detox programs, and most importantly, compassion to those who need it most.

For nearly 30 years, Sister Libby Fernandez has served the homeless in Sacramento, volunteering at homeless shelters, ministering six years at Mercy Housing, and 18 years at Loaves and Fishes and as the executive director of that homeless shelter for 11 of those

years. However, she found herself drawn to a new ministry. Inspired by the Gospel and the Sisters of Mercy founder, Catherine McAuley, she founded Mercy



Pedalers to relieve the misery of the poor by offering care, dignity and respect.

Sister Michelle Gorman, advisory board member for Mercy Pedalers, said, "The most important gift that the Pedalers give is that they are not afraid to look on the homeless women and men with tenderness and to touch them in gestures of human compassion as Jesus

"There are three things the poor prize more highly than gold, tho' they cost the donor nothing; among these are the kind word, the gentle, compassionate look and the patient hearing of their sorrows." – Catherine McAuley

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

touched the outcasts of his time. They take the time to stop and chat with anyone who wishes to share their story."

Sister Michelle continued, "I saw the joy on the faces of persons who find themselves homeless when they are treated with respect, and I witnessed the enthusiasm of the Pedalers to provide this direct service in the spirit of Catherine McAuley and Jesus. Once again, I am reminded of 'the power of one.'"

Sister Libby recruited Mercy Associates and friends of the Sisters to assist her in this ministry. There are

currently over 24 volunteer Mercy Pedalers committing at least two hours a week to reach out to men and women experiencing homelessness.

Gale Filter, retired attorney, avid photographer, and Mercy Pedaler, sees the homeless as part of the Sacramento community.

"You don't see anybody on the streets of midtown Sacramento at six in the morning except me and the homeless people. I believe

most people think of the homeless as a separate entity and I would argue that they are very much part of the community."

Mercy Associate Dorothy Smith, a member of the advisory board and the in-kind donation committee, agrees with Filter. She says, "All neighborhoods are affected by people who are homeless. I am hopeful that the presence of the Mercy Pedalers may soften the attitudes of residents and business people and encourage them to view people experiencing homelessness as humans in a dehumanizing condition."

Filter always has his camera with him when pedaling through the streets of Sacramento. He began volunteering with Sister Libby when he took pictures of homeless men for them to send to their children and families on Father's Day.

"I get to know people because I'll take their photo and then I'll see them later to give them their photo - even emailing some. I discovered that there is a certain magic that occurs when they see it. They see themselves differently than perhaps how the public sees them. I'm also noticing that when they see me coming, they start to get ready to have their photo taken by combing their hair and asking me how they look," Filter said.

Filter admits that his work with Mercy Pedalers has impacted himself, as well. He said, "Sister Libby and I first met 'Kaitlyn,' who has been living on the streets for two years, as she was waking up from a rough night of sleeping next to the railroad tracks. After enjoying a cup of coffee and a granola bar, she had her picture taken with Sister Libby and said that we made her day just by spending some time with her and providing her a few basic necessities. What she didn't realize is that our interaction with her made our day."

At its heart, Mercy Pedalers is a ministry of presence. Sister Libby says, "I found being present in the moment, sharing a cup of coffee together, and calling the person by name are the most important gifts one can offer to the homeless. We hope to build trust

"I saw the joy on the faces of persons who find themselves homeless when they are treated with respect, and I witnessed the enthusiasm of the Pedalers to provide this direct service in the spirit of Catherine McAuley and Jesus. Once again, I am reminded of 'the power of one.'"





and relationships. We want to connect one on one with the homeless community to begin a caring relationship with God at the center.”

Mercy Pedalers believe that God’s mercy will be present by welcoming and reaching out to men and women experiencing homelessness on the streets with a sense of dignity, respect, and love. Once trust is established and the individual has a sense of their own dignity and worth, then the next step is to build on the relationship and offer resources that may help the individual get off the streets.

As she continues pedaling down the street, Sister Libby meets “Emily” and offers small comforts from the supplies on her bike. Sister Libby said good-bye, wished her well and hoped she would see her tomorrow. “Emily” replied, “I hope so, because you are my friend,” as she reached out and gave Sister Libby a hug.

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” -- Matthew 25:40

Photos for this story by Mercy Pedaler, Gale Filter.
See Sister Libby in action at <http://bit.ly/MercyPedalers>

You may support Sister Libby in her ministry by making a gift to Sisters’ Ministries, using the envelope in this issue.

